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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM Panorama

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SUBJECT Interview with Mr. Lyle Stuart

WALLY BRUNER: Well, if all else has failed, maybe this is something you'd be interested in. It's called "Casino Gambling for the Winner." And contrary to what a person should do, the gentleman that wrote his book is Lyle Stuart, who is also a publisher and has a publishing firm by the same name as Lyle Stuart. He's broken a cardinal rule of publishing; he's let his own company publish his own book.

Lyle, welcome to Panorama.

LYLE STUART: Thank you, Wally.

BRUNER: Is that true? Did you break the cardinal rule of publishing?

STUART: Well, it is. As you know, Bennett Cerf never published his own books.

BRUNER: No. He always put them out to Doubleday...

STUART: And recently William Jovanovich wrote a novel and he had Harper's publish it. So it was a decision I had to make. And we're not traditional and I decided, "Why should I let somebody else make all that money?" I knew we were going to have a winner, a hit. So -- and we've had it. We sold 30,000 copies in the first couple of weeks. We haven't had a book for three weeks.

BRUNER: Bennett used to tell me the average novel sold 5000 copies. Is that true?

STUART: That's an average, but that means that an awful

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lot...

BRUNER: Half of them sell more and half of them sell less.

STUART: Yeah. Half will sell 221, or something. Fiction is very difficult, more and more, since people go for the potboiler by the big name. We don't do much fiction. We do a lot of controversial things.

BRUNER: Well, you started off with "The Sensuous Women." That's wasn't a start-off,...

STUART: No, no.

BRUNER: ...but you've been in publishing, what, 20-some-odd years.

STUART: Twenty-two years, yeah. And we started the sexual revolution with the works of Dr. Albert Ellis. And "The Sensuous Woman" was a natural step, and then "The Sensuous Man." And more recently we had one for children that sold more than a half a million copies at nine dollars.

BRUNER: No one ever thought Lyle Stuart would publish children's books. What are you talking about?

STUART: A book called "Where Did I Come From?" It's a sex education for children. And now there's a whole series: "What's Happening to Me?" "How to be a Pregnant Father," and "Why Was I Adopted?" which is our newest.

Now, you wouldn't think a book on adoption -- you know, this is how publishers read things wrong. You wouldn't think a book on adoption would do terribly well. So we printed 15,000 copies, at great expense, because it's in full color. The books were gone in four days. We had to rush back to press. And that takes time with a full-color book.

BRUNER: I read recently where it says when the New York Times is on strike and there cannot be a book review, that you're virtually out of business.

STUART: Not me.

BRUNER: But are many of the major publishers in New York? Does it mean that much to have a book reviewed in The Times?

STUART: Not reviewed, but at least to have a place to advertise, to make the existence of new books known. And this is a period of time when new books are beginning to pour out. This is the beginning of the big season of the year for publishers.

But many, many years ago, I was one of the two publishers -- 22 years ago -- who pioneered the business of having authors on television and radio. And in those days it was considered something that you didn't do; it wasn't dignified. And Frank Edwards, whom you know from Indianapolis, Frank was one of the first people that we toured. And Frank, having been an old radio veteran, was welcomed everywhere and he talked about books.

But many publishing houses in those days said, "No, no, that's not right. That's not where books should be sold."

So, of course, today the whole industry does it.

BRUNER: Well, you know, you're sort of a maverick in what is...

STUART: I'm a maverick, not sort of.

BRUNER: ...a very dignified industry, you know, the pillars and they used to wear the Edwardian collars and the whole bit. The publishers were very distinguished men. And all of a sudden, you're sort of a ruffian that has come in and you publish the kind of books that are highly controversial and -- but now we see you're going away from that.

STUART: Well, no. Where? "Casino Gambling for the Winner" is not going away from that.

BRUNER: But it's not a sex book.

STUART: Oh, no, I don't deal with only sex books. In fact, once we established sex books and started that sex revolution, we moved away from those. We do lots of controversial things all the time. We're doing a book on Jackie Onassis called "Jackie O," and we can't get enough copies from the bindery. It hasn't been shipped out yet, but it's going to be number one in this country.

We're doing a book on the CIA called "Dirty Work." The Washington...

BRUNER: That's one that we wanted to get into a little bit. Now, are all these going out on guaranteed sale, for example, from the publishing house?

STUART: On guaranteed sale? You mean...

BRUNER: I mean to bookstores. When you publish your [unintelligible] editions, are they guaranteed sale to the bookstores?

STUART: No. Trade publishers don't -- there is no

trade publisher I know of who has so-called guaranteed sale. And that's one of the unfortunate...

BRUNER: You mean...

STUART: We take everything back.

BRUNER: Yeah. Well, that's what I mean.

STUART: Oh, guaranteed sale. Oh, yes. I thought you meant guaranteed...

BRUNER: Which means they can have the returns. I mean you may print 25,000 books and send them out, but if they sit in the bookstore for...

[Confusion of voices]

BRUNER: ...you get all of them right back.

STUART: Right. I understand in Japan today they're getting 48 percent of their books back. And in the States, I understand, major trade publishers complain that as many as 30 percent of the books they ship out come back. We've cut that down some with ourselves, but that's because we publish not as many books, and we put a lot more effort behind each one of them.

BRUNER: Well, Lyle, you seem to have -- the ethics of your publishing company, you have sort of gone beyond the bounds of the staid publishing profession. The book that's coming out on the CIA -- and the name of it, say it again.

STUART: "Dirty Work."

BRUNER: "Dirty Work." All right. It's the story of a CIA agent, Agee, and -- former CIA agent, and you're publishing lists of people who he claims were CIA operatives.

STUART: No, not that he claims. I want to make that clear.

BRUNER: Okay.

STUART: The book was put together by Agee, who made some suggestions on foreign articles that we translated, with permission, from the Swedish newspapers, from the Dutch magazines, and so forth; and he wrote an introduction and an article, and that was his contribution. But the business of the names, and there's more than 700, that was researched by Louis Wolfe (?), and who did most of the work on the book and who was not a CIA man and who did not get some high secret lists, but rather came

to journalistic conclusions, based on the methods described in the book, on how you can go to any country in the world, check the embassy record, and very quickly spot who the CIA people are.

And by the way, if we can do it, it's obviously no secret to the Russians, the Cubans, the Africans. I mean...

BRUNER: So you really don't think your book is going to be of any use to any other counterintelligence...

STUART: Oh, no, no. No, absolutely not. It'll be of morbid curiosity to a lot of people, but certainly the intelligence community, they know -- they know each other. I mean we kid ourselves if we don't think so. No. [Laughter] In fact, they work together too well. That bothers me sometimes.

BRUNER: Oh, you think they do? You think they work hand-in-hand?

STUART: I think so. I think so. There's a -- yes.

BRUNER: But then one of the comments in the book, it said that the publication of these names is going to hamper CIA operations, because now they're going to have to transfer operatives to different positions around the world, and this is going to slow down their process and it's going to inhibit them. And therefore they're not going to be able to do their job as well, and that's good.

Do you really feel that way?

STUART: Yes, Wally. Let me tell you, I'm against secret police of any kind all over the world: KGB, Gestapo, Cuban secret police. I think secret police work against a good quality of life.

I think what we have done and what -- rather, what CIA agents have done in my name, as an American citizen, is really horrific: the assassinations, the overthrow of properly elected governments, the manipulation of other governments. And we always tend to support the most reactionary, the dictator, something like the Shah of Iran.

I mean I believe now, based on what I've seen from the reports from Amnesty International, that more people have been tortured and killed in Iran since we put that Shah in there than were tortured by the Gestapo. And that's a pretty big number.

And overthrowing the elected government in Chile, overthrowing the elected government in Guatemala. I mean we do the

very thing that we would condemn every other country in the world for doing. We interfere in the right of people to self-determination.

Now, I happen to be a complete libertarian and I think that it's terrible that this is being done in our name.

BRUNER: But you're not really publishing any books in support of that view. I mean I don't see -- you know, I don't see you out carrying the banner and leading the parade, Lyle, on some of this. I hear you making the comments now, but I mean I would think that you would have a whole stable of books that you would come out on the expose of the CIA in Cuba or what we have done in Guatemala. I don't see...

STUART: Oh, no, I have done. I think you're mistaken.

BRUNER: Oh, have you?

STUART: Oh, sure, yeah. Well, for example, we did a book called "The Shark and the Sardines," by President Ardevelo (?), the only president who lived out his full term in Guatemala, where where he expressed the view of Latin American intellectuals toward our interference in the affairs of Latin America. He was a very democratic man, by the way. This is Ardevelo, not Arbenz, who was a Marxist. Okay?

I published a book like "The Washington Payoff," which exposed how lobbyists were paying off our politicians, and we named the politicians.

I go from field to field...

BRUNER: But were any of the books successful financially?

STUART: Oh, sure.

BRUNER: Really?

STUART: Oh, yes, absolutely. And by the way, very often when I don't expect one to be. For example we did a book called "The Rich and the Super-Rich," and being a small publishing house, it required paying Ferdinand Lundberg enough money so that he could survive for a few years to do his research. And I thought, "No, this isn't what we do." And my wife, who's dead now, said, "You've got to do this. This is a moral commitment. It's too important a book." And we did it, and "The Rich and the Super-Rich" was the number one bestseller in America. It was the number one bestseller in West Germany for five months.

And very often books that I do because I believe they

should be done turn out to be very successful commercially. And very often I do books that I know I'm going to lose money on. For example, as a radio and television man, you know that Norman Colwin (?) is probably the finest writer in the history of radio. And I recently published a book of his essays. Now, we know we have to lose five, six, eight, 10, 12 thousand dollars on that. There's no way. There aren't enough people who'll buy a book of essays even if the Pope wrote them. I mean...

BRUNER: But it's a book you wanted to do.

STUART: Yes. I thought it had to be published. It was too good not to be published.

BRUNER: Another book you want to do are the Castro memoirs.

STUART: Yes.

BRUNER: You're a big fan of Fidel Castro, and a friend, I understand.

STUART: Yes, a friend. We say a big friend. I have a lot of reservations and I speak out when I'm in Havana. I happen to believe -- I mean I'd much rather see a free press. There is free speech there, but I'd much rather see much greater freedoms. I don't happen to be a communist. But I think that he is doing...

BRUNER: How would you describe yourself, politically?

STUART: More revolutionary than any doctrine, under nobody's discipline. I'm somebody who believes that the quality of life should be improved; not that people should be pulled down, but that people should be lifted up.

BRUNER: What about Castro? Are you going to publish his memoirs? Have you talked to him?

STUART: Oh, yes, I've talked to him over the years.

BRUNER: What does he say about it?

STUART: Well, he says -- he says, "Look, my personal life is not important. My own thoughts are not important." He's a political person. I mean he's the pure politician, contrary to the image that we have of him. And, for example, you don't find a photograph of Fidel Castro anywhere in Havana. He's not in the post office. They have Che Guevara, but not Fidel Castro. He doesn't believe in that cult of personality.

I thought it was funny -- I mean not funny, but amusing

that he made fun of Mao. Because, of course, in China Mao was the living god. And he says, "Who cares who I live with or who I date or what I eat for breakfast?"

And I insist that it would be a great public relations thing for Cuba.

I'm doing eight books from Cuba, and I'm very annoyed that the Treasury Department won't give me an exception so that I can pay them royalties directly. And these books are not political, with maybe one exception, by the way. They're novels, they're poetry, they're short stories. Because I think that this chewing gum curtain ought to be dropped. It's ridiculous. You know, we have relations with Cuba -- I mean with Russia, with China. What are we trying to do? We proved that point. We've taught Latin American countries that if they take American property, we're going to punish them. Well, we've done that.

And yet today, by the way, Cuba -- the Cubans have the highest living standards of any Latin American country. I don't think we know this.

BRUNER: Lyle, our time is almost up. You're an interesting man. You have a lot of controversial views, and it's interesting that you're not afraid to just speak out on them.

[Confusion of voices]

STUART: ...says, "He's crazy. Who else would do some of these kinds of things?"

BRUNER: Well, maybe we're all a little crazy in some specific way, Lyle.

But this is your book. It's "Casino Gambling." And this is written by the man that really goes to the crap table in Vegas and really does it all, and in London; and sometimes you do it well and sometimes not so well.

STUART: Well, I talk about how I won \$166,000 on 10 visits, winning on every single visit. And I tell how it's done.

BRUNER: But you only say that you have to learn some basics before you can read the book, because this is not a kindergarten edition.

STUART: Oh, you know that. You read the book. That's very good, Wally.

BRUNER: I spent a little time with it, Lyle

STUART: Good. Thank you.



BRUNER: But Lyle Stuart, and the new book is -- several new books will be coming out. We'll look forward to seeing what happens to Lyle Stuart Publishing.

Thank you for joining us.

STUART: Thank you, Wally. Thanks very much.